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BURRELLE'S

The dream dealers of Hollywood

25

Frontline: Hollywood Dreams

PBS

Tonight, 9 EDT/PDT
(times may vary)

Hey, babe, you're chopped liver in Hollywood if you can't get Stevie Spielberg to return your phone calls. Get a lunch with him, babe, and you're pate from the golden goose.

In this fascinating documentary, we learn that a return phone call from mogul Spielberg is the best you can hope for in a town that runs on who you know, what you make and who you make.

In Hollywood, you're only as good as your last deal. Forget creative movie aking. The grease of Tinseltown is creative deal making.

And the instrument for all this is the telephone, which one powerful agent describes as a "bayonet in this town."

In the land of characters, *Hollywood Dreams* presents a few unforgettable ones. Behind closed doors at the powerful ICM agency, we meet superagent Jeremy Zimmer, a 27-year-old whiz-bang with a nervous twitch. While he makes deals — cajoling directors, stroking stars, tough-talking producers — he twirls his phone cord like a rodeo rope. Roping in those little dealies.

And there's a powerful casting agent who gets that return call from Spielberg. The agent tells Spielberg that John Lithgow isn't interested in a certain role. But he then offers his idea about who should play the part in an unspecified film — Bill Cosby. Another hot property.

When *Hollywood Dreams* is not peeking behind the doors of studio execs, agents and casting directors, the film looks at those who wait for the deals to make them.

These hopefuls plug away in acting classes and endless auditions to get that big break. Many are called to Hollywood. Few are chosen.

Hollywood Dreams is not *The Day of the Locust*. And it's a lot more fun than standing at the seedy corner of Hollywood and Vine. A sense of humor and irony pervades the film. Meanwhile, nearly everyone interviewed here seems to take it all so seriously.

By Monica Collins

MAY 13, 1986

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Joe Piscopo flops without the crazies of 'Saturday Night'



TOM DORSEY
Staff TV-Radio
Critic

Joe Piscopo is a fish out of water when he's not surrounded by a sea of crazy characters as he was on "Saturday Night Live."

The former sportscaster, who made one-line headlines his byline on SNL, goes it alone on ABC-32 tonight at 10 with "The Joe Piscopo New Jersey Special."

Why New Jersey? Because that's where Joe is from and, besides, it's fun to poke fun at New Jersey — or at least Piscopo thinks so.

The special begins with Piscopo jawing with the audience. He does a few voice imitations before he jumps in with a long impersonation of Bruce Springsteen, which seems pointless. The "New Jersey Vice" takeoff with Eddie Murphy doesn't go anywhere either. What a wasted opportunity.

Some of Piscopo's impersonations of celebrities and public figures — such as Ted Koppel, Mikhail Gorbachev, Frank Sinatra, Joan Rivers and Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa — are interesting to see, but most of the credit must go to the makeup crew.

The script material is weak, especially on Gorbachev. Piscopo's one real high note is his David Letterman impersonation.

A routine with Danny DeVito has some possibilities. DeVito is the little guy who can usually get laughs just by stomping on stage. Not tonight, though. He and Piscopo get themselves up in Fred and Barney costumes for "The Flintstones: The Lost Episodes." But somehow, it never becomes a yabba dabba doo time.

The special is dull, dumb and disappointing.

Howie doesn't do it — Howie Mandel ought to stick to playing Dr. Fiscus, the character he does so well on "St. Elsewhere." What he doesn't do so well is comedy concerts. His second hour-long effort at the funny stuff for HBO is on cable TV tonight at 11 and on other dates in May.

The pay network taped his routine before a Chicago audience, which Mandel works over like a mugger. He goes for the jugular by pulling people out of the audience and insulting them with a barrage of obscene accusations. It's all in fun, but the people under attack don't look like they're having much.

The audience goes into fits of giggling every time a dirty word is yelled out, but Mandel doesn't seem to be able to get a smile otherwise. That's too bad because he's an explosion of energy, if he could just find some way to harness it.

The real Hollywood — The most fascinating program on television tonight, especially for people who like to know how things work, is "Hollywood Dreams" on "Frontline" at 9 on PBS-15. KET will show it Thursday at 9.

This isn't the glitzy stuff of "Entertainment Tonight." It's a behind-the-scenes look at how movies are made, and it zooms in on the agents and producers who do all their shooting on the telephone. One agent calls the phone his bayonet. It's obvious from eavesdropping that there's a lot of back stabbing.

"So Burt and Kirk both want their names first in the ad," sighs a frustrated agent. The feuding pair are Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas, who still seem to be having ego problems this late in their careers.

It's probably not surprising that many of the big names behind the cameras are barely in their 20s. But it's still a shock to realize that people just out of college decide what you'll see.



Joe Piscopo impersonates, clockwise from top left, Frank Sinatra, David Letterman, Joan Rivers and Ted Koppel on "The Joe Piscopo New Jersey Special" tonight at 10 on ABC-32.

Listening in on them making their deals is better than most of the movies these days. Incredibly enough, we hear them saying things like, "Who loves ya baby?" Only superlatives are spoken here.

One young film maker says everything has to be the greatest. "At lunch somebody says, 'This is great water! It's the greatest water I ever had!' Then he tells the waiter he

wants a case to take home.

The point is that movies are really made off camera by people trying hard to live up to the image of all those sleazy paperbacks and miniseries about Hollywood.

"It doesn't hurt to be gorgeous. And God knows having talent won't hold you back, but it all gets down to who you know," explains one observer.